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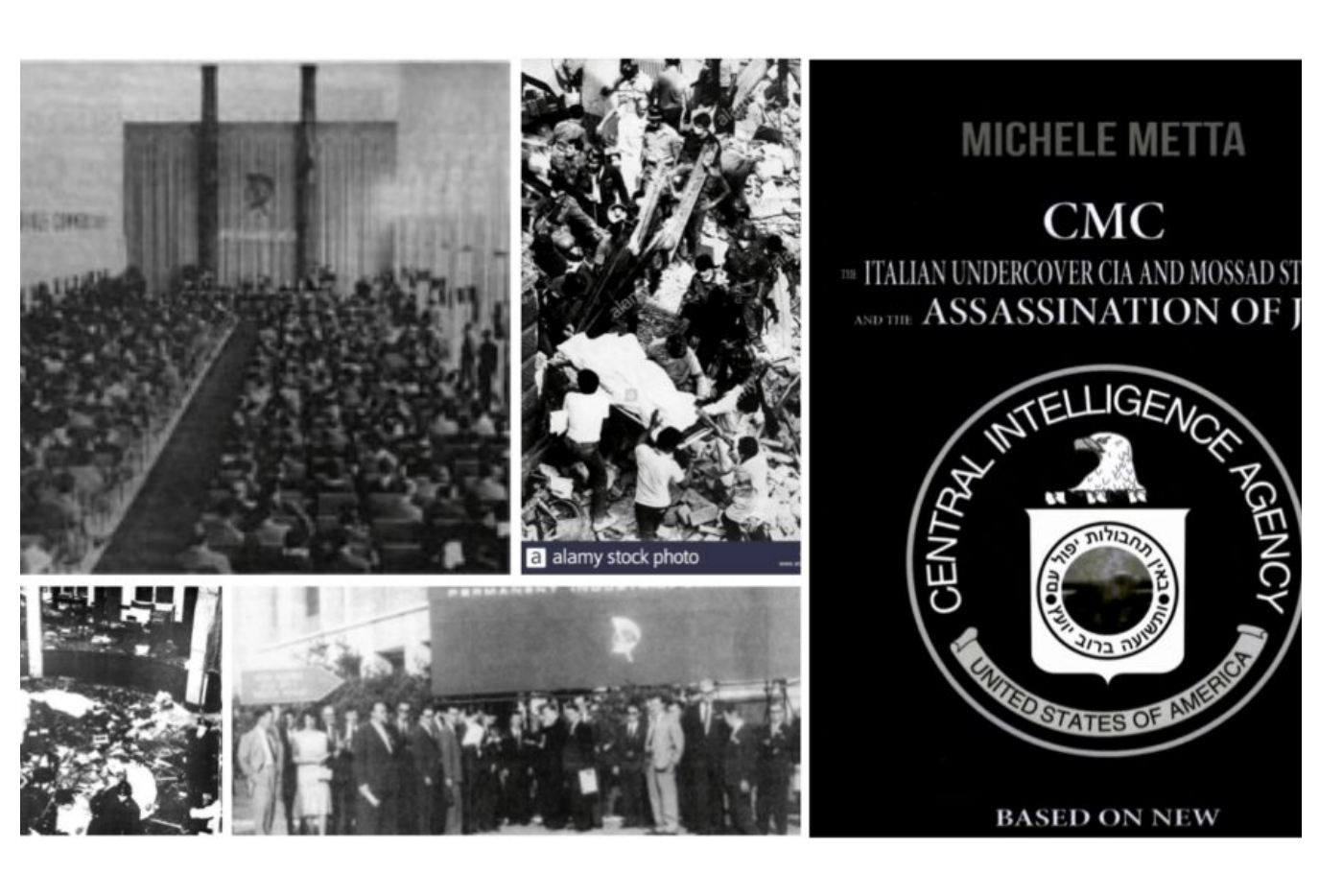
The Canadian Archives, Michele Metta, and the latest on Permindex



Written by John Kowalski in John Fitzgerald Kennedy

A review of

CMC: The Italian Undercover CIA and Mossad Station and the Assassination of JFK

by Michele Metta

with two Appendices

In his book, Michele Metta has provided his readers with a glimpse into the world of Centro Mondiale Commerciale (CMC). But along with that, the author gives us an insight into the politics of post-war Italy that is quite encompassing and incisive. It's very clear that Italy was a hard target of American interests in the Cold War. With the help of some books published in Italy that would not normally be available to an Western audience, Metta takes us further into those attempts to control Italian politics.

Centro Mondiale Commerciale came to the attention of Jim Garrison's investigation into John F. Kennedy's assassination because Clay Shaw, the man he would accuse of participating in a plot to murder Kennedy, was a member of its board of directors. As more than one author had noted, that shadowy corporation had a rather curious background prior to opening in Rome amid much hoopla. They had previously been thrown out of Switzerland due to the controversial nature of some of its members, and also due to the mystery surrounding the company's financial backing.

The charge made by Garrison against Shaw is one of the reasons why there is so much discussion on the internet about CMC, located in Rome Italy, and its associated company Permindex, located in Basel, Switzerland. The discussion has also included much unreliable and/or unverified information that is rooted in accusations made by Lyndon Larouche's *Executive Intelligence Review* (EIR) and David Copeland, *aka* William Torbitt, who wrote *Nomenclature of an Assassination Cabal*. This includes stories depicting Permindex as a front company operated by Montreal lawyer, Louis M. Bloomfield, from which Bloomfield supervised assassinations. These stories have been circulating for many decades and for some people these stories about Bloomfield and Permindex are considered as fact.

When I discovered that an Italian journalist, Michele Metta, had done research on CMC, I was hopeful. Finally, a study of this company that would not build on the falsehoods created by Larouche and Copeland, and instead would provide the reader with a narrative supported by actual evidence. What I found however, was a bit of both. Metta provides evidence that actually proves that Shaw was on the board of directors of CMC, that CMC member Ferenc Nagy was a CIA asset, and that another CMC member, Georges Mandel, *aka* Giorgio Mantello, was connected to Israeli intelligence. The author further describes connections between CMC and the notorious Italian organization, Propaganda Due (P2), that is linked to the "Strategy of Tension" that was responsible for a wave of bombings and violence in Italy. He also provides connections to persons involved in Kennedy's assassination. But the book falls short in another aspect of its story. Metta attempts to link CMC to the "Strategy of Tension" and the assassination of John F. Kennedy. Although he makes some interesting connections in those regards, he does not really achieve his aim.

The book however does an excellent job at showing connections. Metta's research links many members of CMC to Mussolini's old fascist guard and neo-fascists associated with the "Strategy of Tension." He does this by providing names of CMC members and then describing their personal histories. He demonstrates that these ardent cold warriors dreaded socialist and communist parties controlling the Italian government, and were prepared to go to great lengths, including violence, to stop them from achieving power. These are the same people who would also oppose Kennedy's soft-on-communism foreign policy, including his conciliatory attitude towards leftists in the Italian government. These numerous right-wing connections to CMC make it apparent that it could be used as a vehicle for promoting subterfuge in Italian politics and perhaps even play a role in Kennedy's assassination. But connections alone do not constitute proof. The fact that one person knows another, and that person is somehow connected to CMC is not proof that CMC played a role in the Dallas plot. These numerous right-wing connections, however, create a lot of suspicion about this company's activities, a suspicion so great that it demands further investigation into its operations. It also shows that Garrison's interest in the organization was merited and that later attempts to somehow demonstrate that this was all a KGB disinformation ploy are not founded. But more research is needed to provide the actual details of how CMC participated in Kennedy's assassination. Metta does not provide this important evidence. For example, when he attempts to link the financing of the plot to Valerio Borghese and CMC, he offers only more connections, instead of how money went into CMC's bank account and then out to the assassination team.

The author informs us of other events he tries to link to the members of the CMC: for example, interfering with President Jimmy Carter's re-election bid in 1980 and an assassination attempt on his life. He also tries to tie CMC to the assassination of Italian politician, Aldo Moro, in 1978. But again Metta offers only connections between people as proof that CMC played a role in these events.

Before examining his book in more detail, we must first examine the question mentioned earlier: why all the interest in CMC/Permindex, and why it has continued to be a topic of interest for Kennedy researchers for such a long time.

II

As previously stated, this interest in CMC began with Jim Garrison's prosecution of Clay Shaw for conspiracy in the death of President Kennedy. In his investigation he found out that Shaw, who had been the manager of the International Trade Mart (ITM) in New Orleans, had also served on the board of directors of CMC. To the casual observer, Shaw's appointment made sense. CMC, like Permindex and the ITM, were both created to provide a showcase for goods produced by different companies. Given his many years of experience managing the ITM, he appears to have been a good candidate for work with CMC. But Garrison's suspicions were raised when he discovered that Montreal lawyer, Louis M. Bloomfield, who he believed was a former member of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), a precursor to the CIA, was a major stockholder in CMC.[1] Garrison also indicated in his book that *Le Devoir*, a French-language Canadian newspaper, had published an article in 1967 that stated that Bloomfield had done espionage work for the United States government and was a major stockholder in Permindex.[2] While I have yet to see credible evidence that Bloomfield was an OSS agent, Garrison was right about his suspicions regarding CMC. Once the public found out about them it was only a matter of time before stories, ever the more wild, began to circulate about both Permindex and Bloomfield. These accusations came to Bloomfield's attention, and in a letter to I. G. Alk in 1979 he lamented:

> There is an outfit calling itself the North American Labour Party run by some fellow called Larouche, apparently whose propaganda is not treated seriously, but whose propaganda accuses me and other prominent Canadians of all sorts of heinous crimes. (Exhibit 1[3])

These attacks and the perceived damage to his reputation, along with other misinformation about him, were the probable reasons for his wife to ask Library and Archives Canada (LAC) not to release his papers to the public. The archive's compliance with her wishes resulted in two lawsuits against them. (A discussion of these two lawsuits and a third one brought by me can be found in Appendix 1.)

Metta continues in this vein. He believes Bloomfield to be a stockholder in the companies and states that he founded Permindex. (p. 7) The evidence from LAC does not support these statements. He is not a direct shareholder nor a founder of Permindex. (A description of his actual role with these two companies can be found in Appendix 2.)

III

One of the insights I gained about the anti-Kennedy forces in Metta's book is found in a pact made between Italian and American Freemasons against Kennedy, which included a member of CMC and the CIA. This is an important assertion, since it is implying that CMC is involved in an anti-Kennedy plot. It also shows a connection between a member of CMC's board of directors and the CIA. (p. 10) This pact involved Dr. Gigliotti, who was a CIA agent, and was organized by Giuseppe Pièche. (p. 13) Pièche was a member of CMC's board of directors. (p. 15) The purpose of this pact was to oppose Kennedy's bid for the 1960 presidential election. In a letter from the Grand Master of the Freemasons, Enzio Milone, to the Christian Democratic Member of Parliament, Elio Rosati, dated September 24, 1960, he told them to:

> … propagate as much as possible the protestant idea—influence Italian immigrants in the USA to vote against Kennedy … (p. 10.)

But is the pact subversive? To many people, including this reviewer, it looks like typical election politics: encouraging a certain ethnic group to vote a certain way. The fact that it stemmed from a foreign country, Italy, is also not that unusual.

Giuseppe Pièche, who organized the above-mentioned anti-Kennedy pact, also provides a link between CMC and far-right Italian politics. This connection is important because CMC has always been a suspicious entity, the suspicion being that the company owed its existence to a motive other than profit. And Metta does provide the reader with reasons to be suspicious. Pièche was a general in Mussolini's army. If this isn't enough of a fascist credential, Metta goes on to state that he and Mario Scelba "created and directed" the Servizio Antincendio [Fire Service]. He was assisted in the Fire Service by Edgardo Sogno who was connected to P2 and who later told the press that the Fire Service was a NATO organization linked to the Gladio network. (p. 13.[4]) The author also informs the reader that Pièche and Sogno created and ran an organization called "Pace e Libertà" [Peace and Freedom], which received funding from Allen Dulles. (pp. 14-15) These are credentials that should make any reader be wary. But then Metta makes a strained conclusion. He states that Pièche was a member of the CMC Board of Directors; that Antonio Trabuchi, who was present at the signing of the Freemasons' pact, was a also a member of the government led by Fernando Tramboni, who wanted to make Italy into a dictatorship (pp. 9, 15); and finally, that Tramboni's son-in-law, Franco Micucci Cecchi, was also a member of CMC (p. 15).

From these facts he concludes: "Therefore, there is ample evidence so far to sustain that CMC was behind the pact against JFK." (p. 15) Yet, he has already told us that the pact against Kennedy was between American and Italian Freemasons. (p. 9) If CMC was the catalyst for the pact, he should have demonstrated how CMC's board of directors had created and implemented it.

IV

Metta then introduces a new statement into his narrative. It is an assertion which is truly sinister, one that implies Freemason participation in Kennedy's death. At a meeting of the *Sacro Collegio del Rito* [Sacred Panel of Rites] held on December 5, 1981, which Metta describes as "… the high assembly of top Italian Freemasons," there were concerns about a document in the possession of Enzo Milone, whose letter described the anti-Kennedy pact of 1960 mentioned above. (p. 16)

At this meeting, Milone stated: "Everything happening [today] had its matrix in what occurred in 1962." (p. 18) During this meeting, Franco Nataloni stated that: "If these papers were to get into the hands of the D.C. Tina ANSELMI, this could put all of us in trouble." (p. 19)

The Freemasons had a good reason to be concerned about Tina Anselmi. She led an Italian government commission of inquiry that could connect Italian Freemasons to P2 and other subversive activities. (p. 9) Metta then reminds us that the statement regarding what happened in 1962 was after Kennedy was elected and was residing in the White House at the time, so it does not have anything to do with their pact to block his election to the presidency. He goes on to state: "Milone says 1962; when Kennedy is *already* in the White House, and to stop him means something else; it means things like Dallas." (p. 18)

Is he implying that 1962 was the year that the Freemasons began their plot to assassinate Kennedy? It certainly seems like it because he mentions Dallas. But what actually did occur was a lot less sinister. The author also states: "Besides, in 1962 the plot against JFK started involving a key figure of the Italian Intelligence and Freemasonry: Giovanni De Lorenzo, an individual who was closely linked to the CMC …" (p. 24)

But the plot was not an assassination plot; it was a five-point plan to oppose left-wing parties in Italy. These are enumerated by Metta (pp. 34-35):

- Point 1. Program diverse actions for possible emergency situations.
- Point 2. Intensify finances to the forces which oppose the political swing [to the left].
- Point 3. Support single leaders in the Christian Democratic Party (DC) and political lobbies willing to rally around the new President of the Republic Antonio Segni (Segni, like Gronchi before him, placed full trust in General De Lorenzo), who did not like the party's opening to the left.
- Point 4. Support any action which seeks to weaken the structure of the Socialist Party and favor any kind of internal split.
- Point 5. Strengthen voices in the media who are able to influence public opinion in the field of economics and politics.

As can be seen, this was a plan to disrupt the attempt being made by left-wing parties to gain the confidence of Italian voters. As David Talbot mentioned in his book on Allen Dulles, *The Devil's Chessboard,* Kennedy thought that the ruling party in Italy, the Christian Democrats, should open itself up to the Socialists. This "plot against Kennedy" thus was in opposition to "l'apertura a sinistra", the opening to the left that Kennedy would propose on a trip to Rome the next year. (Talbot, p. 464)

V

Metta does however create some suspicion about CMC's connections to the Masonic Lodge P2. P2 was, according to the author, linked to the "Strategy of Tension," which was responsible for much violence in Italy, including the Bologna railway station massacre that killed 85 people and injured over 200 people in 1980. The goal of these attacks was to terrorize the Italian public into accepting an authoritarian government. (p. 21) Led by Licio Gelli and financier Michele Sindona, P2 was declared by the Anselmi Commission to be a criminal organization. P2 was a remarkably dangerous and secret society. Their influence extended beyond Italy, as far away as Argentina. As a result of the Anselmi Commission, it was eventually outlawed.

Metta believes that the P2 lodge and CMC were so closely linked that: "In fact, we are now about to discover in how many infinite ways the CMC is indistinguishable from the Masonic Lodge P2 …" (p. 21)

The evidence he cites to connect CMC to P2 is a company called IAHC, which was a subsidiary of CMC. (p. 21) He then tells us that its board of directors meetings were held at the office of Roberto Ascarelli, whom he also links to Licio Gelli, found guilty of the Bologna massacre. (pp. 21-22) Anselmi's commission stated that P2 also met at Ascarelli's office. (ibid)

This is important evidence. It certainly creates a link between P2 and CMC's subsidiary IAHC, and therefore to CMC itself. Sharing the same offices is similar to the situation Lee Harvey Oswald found himself in, sharing office space with Guy Banister at 544 Camp Street in New Orleans. But while this is evidence of possible collaboration between CMC and P2 through its subsidiary, IAHC, it does not prove conclusively that CMC is indistinguishable from P2. Metta is relying on a connection, and while that is important, it does not tell the reader what subversive activities IAHC participated in. Although this is definitely a step forward in describing CMC, more research is needed to show how IAHC participated in P2 operations and how it participated in the Dallas plot.

VI

Metta also tries to explain to the reader another aspect of the assassination plot; how it was financed. His attempt to link Valerio Borghese to the Dallas plot gets mired in a large number of connections. It does create suspicion that certainly warrants further research, but does not prove that CMC was somehow connected to Kennedy's murder.

Borghese was a naval officer under Mussolini. After the war he was rescued and then mentored by James Angleton. Nicknamed the Black Prince, he became a hardline fascist political figure in postwar Italy. He took part in an attempted coup in 1970. After it failed, he fled to Spain where he lived out the last years of his life.

Metta introduces the reader to a bank called *Credito commerciale e industriale*, which is abbreviated to Credicomin. Credicomin was bought by a company called *Società finanziaria italiana* (SFI). On the board of directors of SFI is a man named Antonio Covo, whose brother-in-law is Giovanni Gronchi, who is linked to CMC members, (p. 47). He then tells us that Credicomin came into the hands of Ramfis Trujillo (p. 50), the son of Rafael Trujillo, the former dictator of the Dominican Republic. Borghese then became Credicomin's president and Trujillo deposited 10 billion lira into Credicomin. This money promptly disappeared. (p. 50) He also adds to the mix the story Gerry Hemming gave to a newspaper in 2005, in which he said that Ramfis Trujillo and Johnny Abbes Garcia, Rafael Trujillo's former intelligence director who tried to assassinate Fidel Castro, met in Haiti in February 1963 to finance Kennedy's assassination. (p. 49) He also mentions that the telephone number of Marcella Borghese, a cousin of Valerio Borghese, was found in Clay Shaw's telephone book. (p. 50)

Though some have doubts about Hemming, if this is all accurate, it does look sinister. Shaw, the accused Kennedy plotter, knows Borghese's cousin. Money is disappearing from a bank controlled by Ramfis Trujillo, who Hemming accused of meeting in Haiti to finance the Dallas plot. These are certainly interesting links; but there is a problem. Metta does not tell us how CMC participated in the financing of the assassination. Yes, Shaw was on CMC's board of directors and Gronchi is connected to CMC, but what exactly did CMC do to facilitate the financing of Kennedy's murder? These connections between SFI, Credicomin, Borghese, Trujillo and Shaw also do more to implicate Credicomin than CMC in Kennedy's assassination, because money disappeared from a Credicomin bank account, not from CMC's bank account.

VII

Metta does however produce real evidence that links CMC to the CIA. Here he provides a document from which the following facts emerge: Dr. Ferenc Nagy, President of Permindex, had asked the CIA to place an American businessman on the board